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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 6526  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1634  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3468  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000232

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAI UPDATE: COUP LEADERS TAKE STRONGER LINE

REF: A. BANGKOK 179 (SURAYUD ON SECURITY)

[1](#)B. OSC SEP20070108032002 (THAKSIN LETTER)

[1](#)C. BANGKOK 83 (COUP RUMORS)

[1](#)D. BANGKOK 55 (SURAYUD BACKPEDALS)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, the Chairman of the Council for National Security (CNS), has publicly said the military may use martial law powers for searches, seizures, and other ends. The Ambassador has requested a meeting with Sonthi and will express our strong opposition to this prospect. Separately, CNS Secretary General Winai warned the broadcast media not to provide coverage of the views of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his associates; media officials and NGO figures reacted negatively to this pressure. Thaksin's lawyer reported to the press that he received a threatening call; hQ5Qo the use of martial law powers and urge the rescission of martial law as soon as possible. End Comment.

GENERAL WARNS THE MEDIA

[1](#)4. (C) General Winai Phattiyakul, Secretary General of the CNS, summoned 50 editors and media executives to Army headquarters on January 10. According to press reports, Winai said the CNS wanted the media to report only "constructive" news, and a failure to comply with this request would result in stricter measures (NFI). Thai daily The Nation quoted Winai as saying "I would like to urge all the TV and radio stations to stop airing statements of the former prime minister and executives of the former ruling party. You guys should know that if we allow representatives of the former premier to make statements every day, the public will be confused." Winai appears to have been motivated in part by coverage of a letter (ref B) in which Thaksin denied culpability for the New Year's Eve bombings in Bangkok. The print media gave prominent coverage to objections by civil society figures to restrictions on press reporting. Septel reports the Ambassador's January 11 discussion with General Winai, which included this issue.

THAKSIN LAWYER THREATENED

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15. (C) Press reports indicated that Noppadol Pattama, Thaksin's lawyer and unofficial spokesman, reported that he had recently received an anonymous death threat by phone, linked to his work for the deposed Prime Minister. In response, Army Chief of Staff Montri Sangkhasap publicly denied that the military would make such a threat. When we met with Noppadol in early December, he told us he had already received at least one death threat but did not take it seriously and had not reported it to the authorities.

#### THAKSIN'S PASSPORT REVOKED

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16. (U) An MFA official informed the media on January 10 that the Ministry had decided to revoke Thaksin's diplomatic passport, although Thaksin will remain entitled to an ordinary Thai passport. Normally, Thai former Prime Ministers and former Foreign Ministers retain a life-long entitlement to diplomatic passports. An MFA official explained the move by referring to unspecified political activities that Thaksin conducted while abroad. The MFA has instructed its diplomatic missions not to provide special assistance to Thaksin.

#### ASSOCIATE PREDICTS THAKSIN TO HEIGHTEN PROFILE

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17. (C) In a January 10 phone call, an American citizen working as a legal advisor to Thaksin told the Ambassador that Thaksin intended to undertake more high profile activities, in order to advance his interests in Thailand. This claim contrasted with public statements by Noppadol Pattama the same day, saying Thaksin would not engage in political activities and would refrain from returning to Thailand if his return would be divisive.

#### RESHUFFLE RUMORS

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18. (U) The press has reported rumors that Prime Minister Surayud will change the composition of his cabinet -- possibly simply by creating new positions. Media articles noted Surayud might want to bring in an ally of former Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, in order to end a public dispute between Chavalit and top CNS figures (ref C and D). Another figure reportedly to have be under consideration is former NSC Secretary General and former Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri. Surayud has denied any intention of revising the composition of his cabinet, however.

BOYCE